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(71) Applicant
Herald Metal & Plastic Works Ltd

(Incorporated in Hong Kong)

800-7 Wing on Life Building,
22 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong.

(72) Inventor
Lam Chi Ming

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
Baron & Warren,
18 South End, Kensington, London, W8 5BU

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(54) Electromagnetic actuators for steering mechanisms of toys

(57) The actuating mechanism for a remote controlled device, for example a radio-controlled toy car, boat or aeroplane includes a movably mounted magnet (4) and a fixed electro-magnet (7). In a preferred form the movable magnet (4) is a permanent magnet mounted on a pivotable lever with one pole positioned between the two opposite poles of the electro-magnet. The electro-magnet is energisable with reversible polarity whereby the lever (3) can pivot in two opposed directions and, by means of a mechanical linkage (11, 13-15), transmit movement for example to a pair of steering wheels (12) of a toy vehicle. The electro-magnet is energised in response to radio signals from a control transmitter.

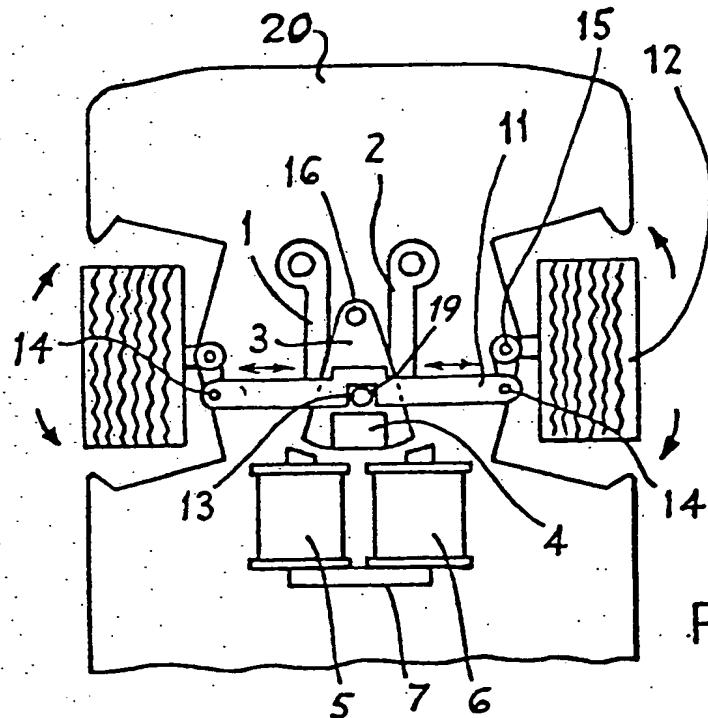


Fig.1

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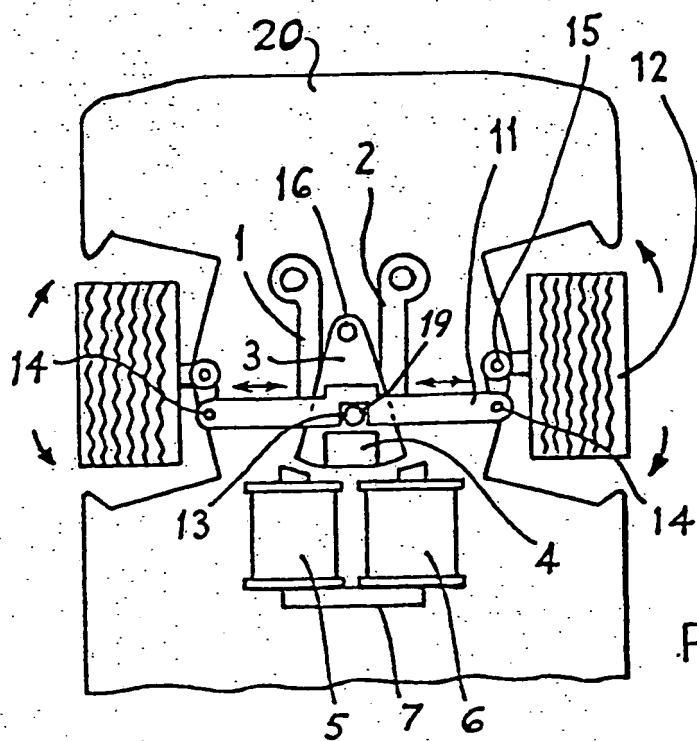


Fig.1

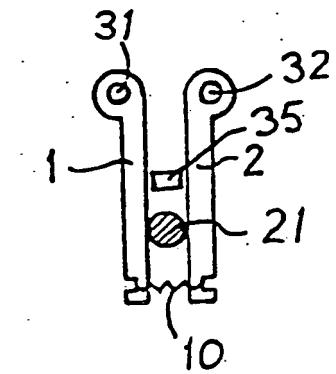


Fig.4

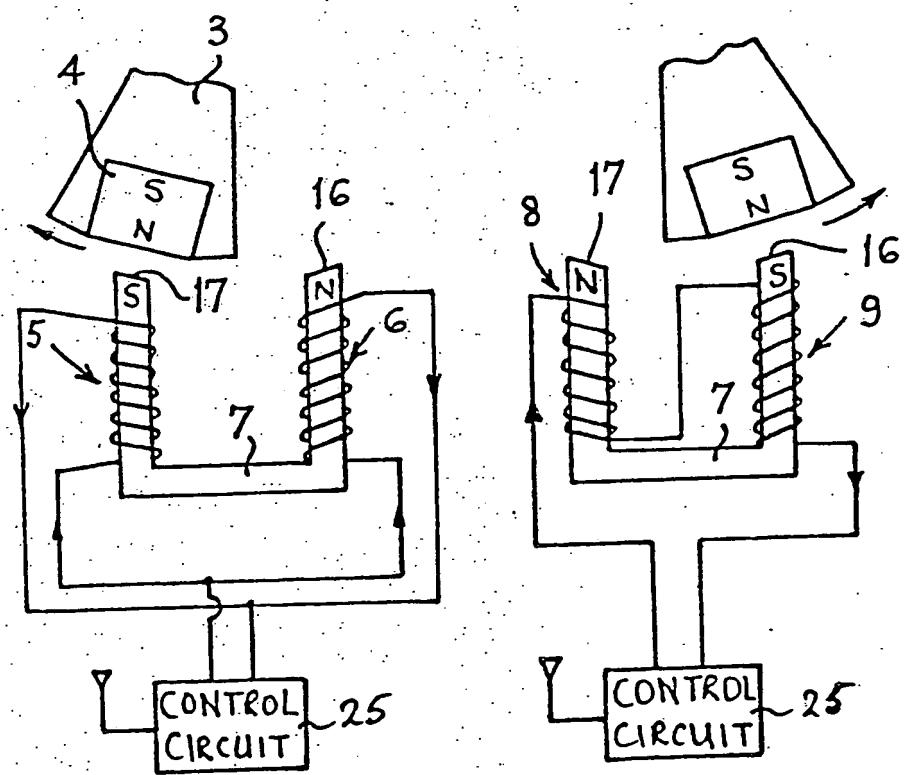


Fig.2

Fig.3

ACTUATING MECHANISM FOR REMOTE-CONTROLLED DEVICE

1 This invention relates to an actuating mechanism, typically a steering mechanism, for a remote-controlled device such as a toy car, boat or aeroplane and particularly to radio-controlled toys.

5 Radio-controlled toys generally have a radio receiver which receives signals from a transmitter held by an operator and convert the signals into mechanical movement, for example to change the angular position of a rudder or of a pair of wheels to steer the toy. There
10 are also remote-controlled toy cars and the like wherein electrical control signals are transmitted to the toy through a wire.

15 Most existing actuating mechanisms of this type include a small drive motor which generates undesirable electrical noise. Other devices are known which use two permanent magnets which a single electrical coil and an E-shaped iron core. In such devices, the two permanent magnets are movable. This however is undesirable in view of the weight, and hence the inertia, of the two
20 permanent magnets and also because of the high friction forces which render the device inefficient.

25 The present invention consists in an actuating mechanism for a remote-controlled device comprising a movably mounted magnet and a fixed magnet, one of said magnets being a permanent magnet and the other being an electromagnet, wherein the movable magnet is arranged to effect the desired actuation and is positioned sufficiently close to the fixed magnet for the respective fields of the two magnets to interact to
30 cause movement of the movable magnet when the electromagnet is energised and wherein means are provided for energising the electromagnet with

1 reversible polarity in response to electrical or radio
signals from a control unit such as a radio
transmitter, energisation of the electromagnet with one
5 polarity causing movement of the movable magnet in a
first direction and energisation with the opposite
polarity causing movement of the movable magnet in a
second direction, thus allowing actuation of the device
in two possible directions.

Preferably, the fixed magnet is the
10 electromagnet. The movable magnet is preferably a
permanent magnet mounted on a pivotable lever, the
lever having a neutral position wherein one pole of the
permanent magnet is positioned between the two poles of
the electromagnet whereby energisation of the
15 electromagnet with one polarity causes pivoting of the
lever in a first direction and energisation with the
opposite polarity causes movement of the lever in the
opposite direction. The lever preferably has a
mechanical linkage to the device to be actuated, and
20 means for centering the lever between the two poles of
the electromagnet when the latter is not energised.

Preferred embodiments of this invention will now
be described with reference to the accompanying
drawings wherein:-

25 Figure 1 is a plan view of the steering mechanism
of a toy vehicle incorporating an actuating device in
accordance with the invention;

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate two alternative
arrangements for wiring the electromagnets shown in
30 Figure 1, and

Figure 4 illustrates a centering device for the
mechanism of Figure 1.

Figure 1 is a plan view of the steering mechanism
of a toy vehicle 20 having a pair of steered wheels 12

1 each of which is mounted on a pivoting arm 15. Each of
the pivoting arms is linked at 14 to a respective end
of a tie bar 11. At a central part of the tie bar 11 is
a square recess 19 which engages with a pin 13
5 projecting from a steering lever 3. This lever is
secured to the floor of the vehicle by a pivot pin 16
and carried at its opposite end a permanent bar magnet
4 with its North pole facing outwardly as shown in
Figures 2 and 3.

10 It can be seen from Figure 1 that the pivoting
movement of the lever 3 causes a reciprocal movement of
the tie bar 11 which in turn pivots the wheels 12, via
the pivot arms 15, to the left or to the right
according to the direction of movement of the lever.

15 The lever is actuated by means of a U-shaped
electromagnet 7 with reversible poles 16-17.

20 The electromagnet is energised with direct
current from a control circuit 25 which processes
incoming radio signals from a control transmitter or
electrical signals transmitted by a wire from a remote
control unit. The wiring of the electromagnet can be
done in various ways, for example with coils 5,6 wired
in parallel as in Figure 2 or with coils 8,9 wired in
series as shown in Figure 3. In either case, the coils
25 around the two legs of the U-shaped core are wound in
opposite direction so that the free ends 16,17 are
always of opposite polarity.

When the radio transmitter sends a signal for the
toy car to make a right turn (i.e. with the wheels
30 pivoting clockwise as seen in the plan view of Figure
1) the control circuit feeds to the electromagnet a
direct current in the direction shown in Figure 2
whereby the free end 16 of the core is energised as a
North pole and the free end 17 is energised as a South

1 pole. The permanent magnet 4, which has its North pole
2 closest to the poles of the electromagnet, is drawn
3 towards the South pole 17 thus causing the lever 3 to
4 pivot to the left as seen in the drawings, and causing
5 the tie bar 11 to move axially to the left thus
6 pivoting the wheels so as to cause the vehicle to turn
7 right. Similarly, when the current, and hence the
8 polarity of the electromagnet, is reversed so that, as
9 shown in Figure 3, the permanent magnet 4 and lever 3
10 pivot in the opposite direction, the tie bar 11 moves
11 to the right as shown in Figure 1 and the wheels pivot
12 anti-clockwise as seen in the same Figure (or clockwise
13 as seen from above the vehicle) to make a left turn.

When the electromagnet is not energised, the
15 permanent magnet 4 and lever 3 are centered between the
16 poles of the electromagnet by a centering mechanism
17 shown in Figure 4. This comprises a pair of centering
18 levers 1,2 which are pivotally attached to the
19 underside of the vehicle at 31 and 32. Their opposite
20 ends are connected by a tension spring 10 which may be
21 under slight tension even in the neutral centred
22 position. A pin 21 projecting from the side of the
23 lever 3 opposite to that seen in Figure 1 extends
24 between the centering levers 1,2 which bear against it
25 under the tension of the spring 10. A fixed stop or bar
26 35 is also provided between the levers. Movement of the
27 lever 3 in either direction to steer the wheels causes
28 one of the centering levers 1,2 to move with it. Since
29 the other lever will be prevented from following it by
30 the fixed stop 35, such movement will also increase the
31 tension in the spring 10. The centering levers,
32 together with the pin 21 and steering lever 3, are thus
33 permanently biased back towards the neutral position in
34 Figures 1 and 4.

The invention thus provides a simple mechanism which has a minimal number of moving parts and low inertia. The mechanism is thus quick to respond and frictional losses are low.

1. An actuating mechanism for a remote-controlled device comprising a movably mounted magnet and a fixed magnet, one of the magnets being a permanent magnet and the other being an electro-magnet, wherein the movable magnet is arranged to effect the desired actuation and is positioned sufficiently close to the fixed magnet for the respective fields of the two magnets to interact to cause movement of the movable magnet when the electro-magnet is energised wherein means are provided for energising the electro-magnet with reversible polarity in response to electrical or radio signals from a control unit, energisation of the electro-magnet with one polarity causing movement of the movable magnet in a first direction and energisation with the opposite polarity causing movement of the movable magnet in a second direction, thus allowing actuation of the device of two possible directions.
2. An actuating mechanism according to claim 1 wherein the fixed magnet is the electro-magnet.
3. An actuating mechanism according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the movable magnet is mounted on a pivotable lever.
4. An actuating mechanism according to claim 3 wherein the lever has a mechanical linkage to the device to be actuated.
5. An actuating mechanism according to claim 4 wherein the linkage includes a pin on the pivotable lever which engages in a recess on a movable tie bar connected to the device to be actuated.
6. An actuating mechanism according to any one claims 3 to 5 wherein the pivotable lever carries the permanent magnet and has a neutral position in which one pole of the permanent magnet is positioned between the two poles of the electro-magnet.

7. An actuating mechanism according to claim 6 wherein the lever is biased towards its neutral position and moved out of the neutral position only when the electro-magnet is energised.

5

8. An actuating mechanism according to claim 7 wherein a pin on the pivoting lever projects between two centering levers which are pivotally mounted and connected together by a tension spring, and wherein a fixed stop projects 10 between the centering levers whereby the tension spring biases the two centering levers inwardly towards the fixed stop, to a position corresponding to the neutral position of the pivotable lever carrying the movable magnet.

15 9. An actuating mechanism according to any preceding claim wherein the electro-magnet is U-shaped, a coil being wound around each leg and the windings being such as to impart opposite polarities to the two free ends of the legs of the electro-magnet.

20

10. An actuating device according to claim 9 wherein the two said coils are connected in parallel.

11. An actuating device according to claim 9 wherein the 25 two said coils are connected in series.

12. An actuating device according to any preceding claim wherein the electro-magnet is arranged to be energised by a control circuit in response to signals received by an 30 associated radio receiver.

13. An actuating mechanism for a remote controlled device, substantially as herein described with reference to figures 1 and 4 in conjunction with figure 2 or figure 3 of the 35 accompanying drawings.

14. A remote controlled toy incorporating an actuating mechanism according to any preceding claim.